

TRI-PARTY PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SURVEY - 2002 RESULTS SUMMARY

The Community Relations Plan of the Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) managed by the Tri-Party Agencies (U.S. Dept. of Energy, U.S. Env. Protection Agency, and Wash. Dept. of Ecology) requires an annual survey on public involvement activities. This evaluation covers a reporting period from January 2002 through March 2003.

Hard-copy evaluations were available at the March Hanford Advisory Board (HAB) meeting. Ecology emailed an announcement about the survey to the HAB distribution list and the Hanford email listserv. The survey was also advertised on Ecology's Website. Sixteen surveys were submitted via the Internet, only one hard copy was returned. The results are printed below. Comments were taken directly as contributed.

Average scores are the average of all responses, i.e., if no rank was given, it was not counted in the total.

Mode is the answer given most frequently, if none is listed it was tied for rank.

Written materials from TPA were mailed early enough to review/respond?

Average = 3.9

Mode=4

12 Participants

Specific answers/examples included:

I don't remember receiving any.

The Solid Waste EIS - Second issuance is grossly lacking in time to 'review. 45 days is not nearly enough time. The Tri-Parties (read DOE) has violated the TPA public involvement provisions by scheduling hearings with less than 30 days notice. DOE has violated the public trust.

Some of the material came just a few days before, the same day, or after the due date. Maybe E-mail will be better. **(About 512 people have moved from the "Highly Interested" mailing list to an email "listserv", this is what the person is referring to.)**

Received your request for evaluation 5-2-03 you request info 5-2-03 - suggest poor planning on your part, not giving enough time to respond.

Yes, in all instances.

Written materials were visually interesting and easy to understand?

Average = 3.0

Mode=none

13 Participants

Specific answers/examples included:

I don't remember receiving any.

Documents are usually too long and technical

The material was unreadable (dark blue on black).

Titles are difficult to get pictures are often too small

Location of reactors need more information on 780 elv. storage sight.

The Solid Waste EIS fails to provide the factual information in an easily understood format showing the three major classes of decisions DOE hopes to make, the magnitude of the impacts from sending waste to Hanford, and the impacts on groundwater through time.

Sometimes it is difficult to provide information in which it explains the "so what" questions on why should I attend this particular meeting. Would like to see if the Tri-Party Agencies could come up with a couple of standard templates that could be easily recognized by the public as being both TPA, and about Hanford.

Materials were available and easily accessible over the Internet?

Average=3.6

Mode=none

Ten Participants

Specific answers/examples included:

Didn't look

Don't know. Didn't use the Internet to seek materials.

As a Downwinder there is never enough information. However at times the information is writtend in such a way that for a layman it is difficult to understand.

WDOE Web site at times difficult to access. Very slow response.

Did the written materials you received motivate you to attend a meeting or to contact the Tri-Parties about an issue?

Yes=8

No=6

Don't know=3

17 Participants

(No additional comments were provided.)

Do you recall media ads about TPA public involvement activities and where?

Newspaper=4

TV=1

Radio=none listed

Several forms=4

11 Participants

Specific answers/examples included:

Newspaper only — but then I was actually looking for them!

I don't see or hear advertisements — I am best notified by fyer/mailling information.

None that I recall in the Oregonian newspaper or on KOPB.

I don't remember seeing any ads.

Two or three different media.

Hanford News Letters

The media notices were visually interesting and easy to understand.

Average=3.6

Mode=4

Five Participants

One specific comment:

The media notices were not always clear.

Did the notices motivate you to attend a meeting or contact the TPA about an issue?

Yes=7

No=7

Don't Know=3

16 Participants

Specific answers/examples included:

Most are too wordy and technical. I don't notice "media notices" as a rule.

It is difficult for me to become as involved as I would like; Franklin County orchardist.

>>>>>>>>>IF YOU ATTENDED ANY MEETINGS<<<<<<<<<

The time, location, and room setup were appropriate.
Average=4.1 Mode=None EightParticipants

Specific answers/examples included:

Conditions and meetings varied from very good to poor depending on staff involved.

Chairs are always too close together so people skip seats then have to fill them in later. Very uncomfortable.

The written materials provided at the meeting(s) were informative and easy to understand.
Average=3.5 Mode=3 Six Participants

One specific comment:

Getting better

The audio/visuals (overheads, slides, videos) were informative and easy to understand.
Average=3.5 Mode=3 Six Participants

Specific answers included:

Some are better than others.

The SOS meeting was too long given the number of presenters.

Sometimes the visuals are too complicated. Need to make sure we have a balance of information.

(The following answers were provided by one individual)

Far too often the materials are written in DOE-speak and are designed to hide the meaning and intent of DOE's actions. They need to plainly and bluntly say what DOE is doing. For example: Do not call a mega-dump a "lined modular facility". Call it what it is. Call it a huge dump. Do not call waste disposal waste management. It isn't being managed. It is being abandoned. Do not call covering up waste with dirt cleanup. Call it what it is. Call it sweeping the waste under the carpet. Don't call DOE standards protective. They are only protective of DOE. They are not protective of the public or the environment.

Do not attempt to portray or use the local national lab as an “independant” analysis. They are far from independent. If anything, they control much of what DOE does, says, and thinks. Far from being independent, they created much of the problem. Far from representing science, they represent a small part of the views of the much larger science community. Use the independent science community instead. And that does not mean the National Academy of Science, or related organizations. They are equally as bad and equally as kept as the national labs.

Tri-Party speakers used language and presentation styles that made the information understandable.
Average=3.3 Mode=none Six Participants

Specific answers included:

Usually too long and full of acronyms.

Varied with individuals.

(The following answers were provided by one individual)

Far too often the language avoids specific meaningful terms and instead uses “dumbed-down” substitutes. Cleanup itself is a misnomer. For example: DOE has frequently tried to ask the public “How clean is clean?” This is a rhetorical question. It is intended to evade and confuse. The simple answer is that “clean is clean”. Contrarily “clean is not dirty.” A better rephrasing of the rhetorical question is “How filthy is marginally acceptable?” That is what DOE is asking. And if they are wanting to know how much filth and poison the public is willing to accept, they should ask that bluntly.

They should not candy coat it or use marketing gimmicks to try to sell dirty as clean.

For technical language, there is almost always common language and ideas that can be used instead. For regulations, common substitutes are also available. Superfund is a good substitute for CERCLA. Even better is to say what that implies, that EPA governs the work to remove the contaminants, and that under Superfund the work is less stringent, less protective and less permanent than under State regulations.

Tri-Party speakers were responsive and sensitive to different views and opinions.
Average=3.3 Mode=4 Six Participants

Specific answers included:

Usually they are. Certain individuals should not work with the public.

Highly variable. (Some people are some people aren't.)

Other than this public involvement report, did you provide any ideas to the Tri-Parties on issues during this reporting period?
Yes=seven No=six Don't know=three 16 Participants

Specific answers included:

As one of the agencies, I don't think I can fairly answer this question.

Don't entomb in concrete...save ground water.

Do not feel qualified.

During the reporting period, which Hanford issues were handled especially well, and which issues that could have been handled better?

Six participants gave specific answers:

Hanford Solid Waste EIS Questions were not answered very well.

I don't generally go to meetings, and rarely to hearings. I stay in touch by e-mail and listen to National public radio.

Providing the option of email notices will be good for me. It isn't appropriate to only rely on email notices, however.

Poor coverage of the cocooning operation of reactors

Most of the meetings were good.

(The following answers were provided by one individual)

The bad examples unfortunately outweigh all of the good work and make that work pointless. The budget process and meetings were very poorly done. The Solid Waste EIS process has been extremely poorly done. The Tank Waste Scoping meetings were very poorly done. The Ecosystem work has been extremely bad.

The problems with all of these go back to DOE Headquarters. No matter the good work the local staff attempt to do, the current administration directions will make the local offices look stupid, incompetent, arrogant and unresponsive to the public. Incompetence starts at the top and tarnishes all of those below them.

Do you have any suggestions for improving Tri-Party Agreement public information and involvement?

Seven participants gave specific answers:

Informal briefings and discussions on "hot topics" are preferred over the formal meeting format.

Not everyone has cable. Community sessions on cable TV without a public forum are not useful for me.

Print material in readable form.

Go get a person from the street in Richland and have them read it...if they don't get it, re-write it.

Problem of handling radioactive wastes is too complicated and complex for the average individual to understand. In my opinion a more meaningful approach would be to have an oversight group with technical backgrounds (not Hanford related) to review and comments on the various programs. If DOE is doing a bad job, apply political pressure to have the problem corrected. More effort should be put into publishing data on how problems are being addressed and less effort in having public meetings in which a very small percentage of people attend and the results of the meeting are of very little value in solving the overall problem.

Not at this date—PS—My old PRESARIO 1030 and AOL will not download. They—AOL—claim it is too much material.

I like the move to email.

Do you have any suggestions for improving Tri-Party Agreement public information and involvement? Continued...

(The following answers were provided by one individual)

Comply with the public involvement provisions of the agreement. When DOE chooses to ignore those provisions, the regulators should immediately invoke dispute resolution.

Comply with the budget requirements of the agreement. When DOE chooses to ignore these, the regulators should immediately invoke dispute resolution and failing that, sue DOE.

Point out those instances where the agreement is not protective of public health and safety. Let the public clearly know and understand (DOE too) that the agreement is a legal agreement that suspends enforcement action while cleanup proceeds. It in no way means that DOE is complying with the law or is in compliance with the law. DOE is in ongoing noncompliance with the laws of the State and the Federal government. The agreement provides DOE an opportunity to come into compliance over time and recognizes that they cannot accomplish everything instantly.

This also means that when DOE works to extend schedules, that they violate the agreement and go into active noncompliance. When this happens, the regulators should strongly focus their attention by using all of the enforcement provisions of the agreement and by going to court outside the agreement when that does not work. DOE has been cut far more slack than they ever should have.

It is time for the regulators to take enforcement actions that seek to penalize senior individuals within DOE when they fail to do the job.

CONCLUSIONS

Far fewer people participated in the survey than the previous year, with nearly double the respondents for the 2001 survey.

Responses to the survey were similar to last year, with no major improvement, or decrease, in satisfaction in any one area.

